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ABSTRACT

Data for this study of Japanese American intermarriage in Denver (Colorado) from 1910-11 to 1980-81 were collected from marriage records in the Office of the Clerk and Recorder for the City and County of Denver. In order to compare intermarriage trends with available census figures (mostly on population size and sex composition), records were reviewed for all census years and the year following. Findings include the following. There is a pattern of increasing levels of Japanese American intermarriage over time. This same pattern was seen in similar studies conducted in Hawaii and California. In all cases, this partly reflects cultural, social, and economic changes occurring within successive Japanese American generations. There was no clear relation between intermarriage rate and population size. When the Denver intermarriage rate began rapidly increasing, Japanese American females intermarried more frequently than males. The study concludes that Denver, as an "outlying area," may exhibit similar patterns, but at times, different rates of intermarriage than places with numerically and proportionally larger Japanese American populations. (RM)

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Japanese American Intermarriage

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Japanese American Intermarriage

The extent of intermarriage across racial and ethnic lines has been considered a major indicator of the permeability of boundaries between minority and majority groups (Merton, 1941; Bogardus, 1959; Gordon, 1964). Such boundaries, of course, can be maintained by minority as well as majority group norms and may, in turn, reflect the degree of minority group organization, majority group dominance, and intergroup antipathy. Some diminishing of the latter conditions and the development of social proximity between large numbers of minority and majority group members, for example because of residential or occupational patterns, are commonly seen as necessary conditions for high rates of intermarriage (cf. Gurak and Fitzpatrick, 1982: 922).

Research on racial and ethnic intermarriage in the United States has been conducted for at least seven decades. Reviews of earlier findings can be found in Barron (1951) and Barnett (1963) and representative examples of pre-1972 work are listed in Barron (1972: 339-345) and Wilkinson (1975: 175-182). Since 1975, published studies have provided data on blacks (Monahan, 1976; Monahan, 1977; Porterfield, 1978), Catholic national origin groups (Alba, 1976; Alba and Kessler, 1979), Jews (Mayer, 1980; Lazerwitz, 1981), Native Americans (Price, 1981) and Hispanic groups (Murgia and Frisbie, 1977; Schoen et al., 1978; Gurak and Fitzpatrick, 1982; Murgia, 1982). Intermarriage figures also appear in recent reports by the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1978: 7-8) and the National Center for Health Statistics (1979: 12-14). An overview of all of this material indicates that levels of intermarriage are increasing over time although, as might be expected, there are major differences in both rates and patterns between and within

specific groups.

Unfortunately, the existing research on intermarriage gives little direct attention to Japanese Americans (or other Asian American groups). Like blacks, Japanese Americans are a racially distinct group which has experienced a long history of discrimination. Yet in the past several decades, Japanese Americans have attained a degree of social and economic mobility (Kitano, 1976), and an examination of their intermarriages can contribute insights into the general forces that promote or hinder racial and ethnic intermarriage.

(Table 1 about here)

A small amount of data on Japanese American intermarriage is available from published sources and these are summarized in Table 1. The data show increases in rates over time and a tendency for intermarriages to involve Japanese American females more often than males. Intermarriage rates and patterns are roughly comparable for Hawaii and areas in California, but the few available figures for Kansas, Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, D.C. are distinctly high. However, the Japanese American population in Kansas was very small and dispersed (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1971a) while that of the latter three areas was primarily located in the metropolitan Washington, D.C. region and was likewise small (particularly after subtracting Japanese nationals from census counts)(U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1971b,c,d; 1972). Only three studies have investigated Japanese American intermarriage in any detail. Adams (1937) found little Japanese American exogamy from 1912 to 1934 in Hawaii and attributed this to the group's cohesiveness which allowed them to maintain traditional marriage practices. More contemporary work by Tinker (1973) and Kikumura and Kitano (1973) reported that Japanese American intermarriage levels had climbed to nearly 50 percent during the early 1970's

in Fresno and Los Angeles Counties. These authors explained intermarriage in terms of factors such as increased acculturation over successive generations (the highest rates being found among the the third or Sansei generation), changing sex role expectations, and improved societal attitudes toward Japanese Americans.

Despite the above, further research is needed on Japanese American intermarriage. Existing data is old--none are more current than 1972--and it is necessary to investigate trends through the 1970's and into the 1980's, especially since this period encompasses the young adult years of a good proportion of the Sansei. In addition, information has been previously gathered only in regions with numerically and proportionally larger Japanese American populations (apart from the few exceptions noted above) like Hawaii and places in California. This follows the usual practice in intermarriage research as it more logically allows for the generalization of findings from a sample to the group as a whole. However, there are substantial Japanese American populations in "outlying" areas because of prewar migrations eastward, the removal of the West Coast population into concentration camps during World War II, and postwar geographic mobility which has accompanied social and economic mobility. A rough indication of this can be found in 1980 census figures which showed over 9,000 Japanese in the following states outside of Hawaii and the West Coast: New York (24,524), Illinois (18,550), Texas (10,502), Colorado (9,858), and New Jersey (9,905) (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1981). Intermarriage data for Japanese Americans (and, in fact, for other groups as well) need to be collected from outlying areas where smaller but significant ethnic communities may exist. This study addresses the preceeding concerns by examining Japanese American intermarriage in

Denver from 1910-11 to 1980-81.

Study Design

Denver is a good location outside of Hawaii and California to investigate Japanese American intermarriage. Colorado was the easternmost point of early Japanese migration and many people came to Denver after 1900. By 1909, the Denver Japanese community had several hundred residents, 67 businesses, and various service organizations. The population again grew significantly during World War II because of voluntary migration from the West Coast and the forcible removal of nearly 8,000 Japanese Americans to a concentration camp in southeast Colorado. Growth due largely to inmigration has continued from the 1950's to the present (Endo, forthcoming).

Denver is also a good research site as the state of Colorado, unlike California for instance, never legally prohibited marriages between whites and Asians. Nevertheless, it should not be inferred that this region had a benign social climate where intermarriage would not be discouraged. Denver and Colorado experienced two brief but important periods of overt antiJapanese agitation, in 1901-10 and 1942-44. In addition, Colorado did have a law prohibiting marriages between whites and blacks which was first passed by the territorial legislature in 1864, upheld by the state supreme court in 1942, and not repealed until 1957 (Endo, forthcoming).

Intermarriage data for this study were collected from marriage records in the Office of the Clerk and Recorder for the City and County of Denver. In order to compare intermarriage trends with available census figures (mostly on population size and sex composition), records were reviewed for all census years and the year following (to obtain a larger number of cases) from 1910-11 to 1980-81. The records used were of marriages that had actually taken place

rather than marriage applications as a small percentage of applicants (currently between five and 10 percent) do not get married within the allotted time period. Following Tinker (1973) and Kikumura and Kitano (1973), Japanese American marital partners were identified by surname. This is a good technique as few Japanese Americans have changed their surnames. Other information such as fathers' names and mothers' maiden names were available to help in the identification process. To avoid possible ambiguity, the few marriages which included individuals of partial Japanese ancestry were not counted. Marriages between a Japanese American partner and any nonJapanese American partner were considered intermarriages.

(Table 2 about here)

Results

The rates of Japanese American intermarriage in Denver are shown in Table 2. Data for 1910-11, 1920-21, 1930-31, and 1940-41 were combined as an average of only nine Japanese American marriages occurred during each of these periods. The intermarriage percentages in Table 2 differ somewhat from those of comparable time periods in Hawaii and areas in California found in Table 1; for instance, the 1910-41 Denver rate is comparatively high as is the 1970-71 level of 64 percent which is approximated only by the 1971 San Francisco rate of 58 percent. The Denver percentages are also less than those for the very small numbers of Japanese Americans in Kansas and the Washington, D.C. region. Finally, the Denver data indicate that, at least in this city, the current trend is toward higher rates of intermarriage.

A pattern of increasing levels of Japanese American intermarriage over time characterizes Denver (Table 2) and Hawaii/California (Table 1). In both cases, this partly reflects cultural, social, and economic changes occurring

within successive Japanese American generations (Tinker, 1973; Kikumura and Kitano, 1973; Endo, forthcoming). The prewar figures in these tables mostly include first generation or Issei marriages. Issei tended to adhere to traditional endogamous marriage practices; further, many males were married by proxy in Japan through arrangements made by their families or friends. The postwar data encompass at first larger numbers of second generation or Nisei marriages and then, by the mid-1960's, more and more Sansei marriages. The recent high intermarriage rates are most charateristic of Sansei marriages. For example, Tinker (1973) reported that only 17 percent of the Nisei but 58 percent of the Sansei marriages in Fresno involved a nonJapanese American partner.

(Table 3 about here)

Comparisons between the Denver Japanese American intermarriage rates (Table 1) and information on numerical and proportional group size in Table 3 reveals no clear relation between rate and size. For instance, intermarriage levels increased dramatically from 1950-51 to 1980-81. During the same time, the number of Japanese Americans in Denver grew and then declined so that the group was about the same size in 1980 as in 1950--and their proportion of the total Denver population changed very little, from 0.6 percent to 0.5 percent. In addition, the numbers of Japanese Americans in the metropolitan area and the state gradually increased between 1950 and 1980 but their proportions of the respective total populations decreased slightly. Obviously, changes in group size over time are not having much direct effect on Denver intermarriage rates.

Table 2 shows that since 1950-51, when the Denver intermarriage rate began rapidly increasing, Japanese American females intermarried more frequently than males. (Earlier data do show the opposite pattern but are based on only five cases of intermarriage). This pattern is also seen in much of the postwar Hawaii/California data in Table 1. Female predominance in intermarriage likewise

occurs for Chicanos (Murgia, 1982) but males are more often involved in the case of blacks (Heer, 1966; Monahan, 1976). For Japanese Americans, one possible explanation are imbalances in the group's sex ratio, or the number of men per one hundred women (Kikumura and Kitano, 1973). However, the data in Table 3 do not support a relation between sex ratio and the Denver intermarriage rate. The city, metropolitan area, and state sex ratios for 1950 and 1960, for example, do not correspond to the high percentages of Japanese American females in 1950-51 and 1960-61 intermarriages. Even the lower 1980 sex ratio does not match the almost two to one predominance of Japanese American females in 1980-81 intermarriages. Furthermore, census figures for 1980 are available by age and sex, and when only young adults age 20-35 are examined, the sex ratios for the city, metropolitan area, and state are 95, 93, and 98 respectively (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1981). Clearly other variables are causing the sex patterning in Denver intermarriages. Some possibilities like changing female role expectations have been described by Tinker (1973) and Kikumura and Kitano (1973), but further evidence needs to be collected.

Conclusion

To return to the concerns raised earlier in this study, the Denver data provide some indication that the present trend is toward higher levels of Japanese American intermarriage. In addition, comparisons between Tables 1 and 2 suggest that Denver, as an "outlying" area, may exhibit similar patterns but, at times, different rates of intermarriage than places with numerically and proportionally larger Japanese American populations. This latter conclusion has important implications generally for research on racial and ethnic intermarriage although more work is needed on intermarriage in smaller ethnic communities. Obviously, more studies of Japanese American intermarriage are also necessary including rigorous investigations of the consequences of high rates of exogamy.

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Table 1. Summary of Published Data on Japanese American (JA) Intermarriage

Area	Period	% JA Marriages Which Were Intermarriages	% Intermarriages With JA Females	Source
Los Angeles Co.	1924-33	2	37	Panunzio (1942)
"	1948-51[ab]	12	62	Burma (1952)
"	1971-72[ab]	48	60	Kikumura and Kitano (1973)
San Francisco Co.	1958	25	--	Omatsu (1972)
"	1972	58	65	"
Fresno Co.	1958-61[a]	12	54	Tinker (1973)
"	1962-64[a]	21	33	"
"	1965-67[a]	37	50	"
"	1968-71[a]	48	49	"
California	1955-59[ac]	25	66	Barnett (1963)
Hawaii	1912-16[a]	7	28	Adams (1937)
"	1920-28[a]	5	55	"
"	1928-34[a]	9	53	"
"	1945-54[d]	22	78	Cheng and Yamamura (1957)
"	1961-62	34	66	Schmitt (1965)
"	1970	47	62	Kikumura and Kitano (1973)
Kansas	1947-69	91	--	Monahan (1971)
Washington, D.C.	1968-70	73	74	Monahan (1977)
Maryland	1969-70	85	67	"
Virginia	1969-70	90	76	"

[a] Data originally reported by year or groups of years have been combined.
[b] 1972 data were for January-June.
[c] Excludes 1956.
[d] For a similar period, 1948-53, Parkman and Sawyer (1967) reported an intermarriage rate of 22 percent.

Table 2. Japanese American (JA) Intermarriage in Denver

Period	Number of JA Marriages	% JA Marriages Which Were Intermarriages	% Intermarriages With JA Females
1910-41[a]	35	14	0
1950-51	70	11	63
1960-61	51	24	58
1970-71	70	64	53
1980-81	69	74	65

[a]Includes 1910-11, 1920-21, 1930-31, 1940-41.

Table 3. Size and Sex Ratio of the Japanese American (JA) Population in Denver, the Denver Metropolitan Area, and Colorado[a]

Year	Denver			Denver Metro Area[b]			Colorado		
	Number of JA	% of Total Population	JA Sex Ratio[c]	Number of JA	% of Total Population	JA Sex Ratio	Number of JA	% of Total Population	JA Sex Ratio
1910	585	0.3	--[d]	735	0.3	--[d]	2300	0.3	2030
1920	465	0.2	--[d]	821	0.2	--[d]	2464	0.3	186
1930	349	0.1	182	1028	0.3	141	3213	0.3	135
1940	323	0.1	113	841	0.2	119	2734	0.2	123
1950	2578	0.6	110	3548	0.6	117	5412	0.4	122
1960	3049	0.6	98	4712	0.5	95	6846	0.4	94
1970	2676	0.5	86	5491	0.4	84	7831	0.4	79
1980	2458	0.5	85	6907	0.4	85	9870	0.3	80

[a] Data from U.S. Bureau of the Census (1913; 1923; 1932; 1943; 1952; 1963; 1973; 1982).
[b] Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (counties of Denver, Adams, Arapahoe, Jefferson, Boulder)
[c] Number of males per 100 females.
[d] Data not available.